

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TAGS: TECN, IN, US
SUBJECT: INDO-U.S. NUCLEAR RELATIONS

REF: NEW DELHI 9935

1. "INDIAN EXPRESS" CORRESPONDENT SAEED NAQVI, WRITING
IN THE PAPER'S JULY 13 EDITION, REPORTS THE ARRIVAL
IN BOMBAY OF A TEAM OF US NUCLEAR ENGINEERS--EMPLOYEES
OF GENERAL ELECTRIC--TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITIES OF
EXPANDING TARAPUR'S WASTE STORAGE FACILITIES. NAQVI
ALSO REPORTS THAT THE COST OF RERACKING IS NOW
ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT RS. 10 MILLION (DOLS 1.2 MILLION)
INSTEAD OF RS. 30 MILION (REFTEL). HE ATTRIBUTES
THE REDUCTION IN COST TO THE FACT THAT SPECIAL TOOLS
CAN NOW BE DEVELOPED IN INDIA TO PERMIT REMOVAL OF
TARAPUR'S EXISTING STORAGE RACKS. NAQVI STATES THAT
THE NEW STORAGE CONFIGURATION IS EXPECTED TO BE
INSTALLED BY FEBRUAR 1979. IT IS DESIGNED, HE SAYS,
TO ACCOMMODATE THE SPENT FUEL DISCHARGED FROM TARAPUR
BETWEEN NOW AND ABOUT 1985, AND "IT IS BELIEVED
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THAT THIS WILL ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE
PLAN FOR DISPOSING OF SPENT FUEL ON A LONG-TERM BASIS.
THIS INCLUDES THE POSSIBILITY OF REPROCESSING THE
WASTE AT THE ADJACENT REPROCESSING PLANT."

2. WRITING IN THE JULY 12 "HINDUSTAN TIMES", WASHINGTON

CORRESPONDENT N.C MENON SUGGESTS THAT "PERHAPS INDIA' GREATEST CLAIM TO INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ACCLAIM RESTS ON ITS PERFORMANCE IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD. THE QUIET, SOLID WORK THAT WENT ON IN INDIAN LABORATORIES WAS INITIALLY KNOWN ONLY TO AN ELITE MINORITY IN SOME COUNTRIES. BUT THAT CHANGED WITH THE POKHRAN BLAST OF MAY 1974: THE WORLD SUDDENLY SAT UP AND TOOK NOTICE." MENON NOTES A FEW CLOUDS TODAY, HOWEVER, ON INDIA'S SCIENTIFIC HORIZON.

3. FOR EXAMPLE, APPROVAL BY THE US CONGRESS OF THE 7.6-TON SHIPMENT OF URANIUM TO INDIA DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE US HAS ACCEPTED THE "RIGHTNESS" OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR STAND, MENON SAYS, BUT RATHER THAT PRIME MINISTER DESAI CONVINCED AMERICAN LEADERS THAT, GIVEN PUBLIC OPINION IN INDIA, "IT WOULD BE SUICIDAL FOR THE JANATA GOVERNMENT EVEN TO APPEAR TO BE CONSIDERING SIGNING THE NPT OR ACCEPTING FULLSCOPE SAFEGUARDS. RATHER THAN "FORCE THE NEW INDIAN GOVERNMENT INTO A POLITICALLY VULNERABLE CORNER," MENON CONTINUES, THE US HAS ADOPTED A POLICY OF "CREEPING STRANGULATION, TO GET INDIAN NUCLEAR PLANTS UNDER SAFEGUARDS ONE AT A TIME, SO GRADUALLY THAT PUBLIC OPINION IN INDIA DOES NOT BUILD UP TO EXPLOSIVE LEVELS." REFERRING TO RECENT INDO-US TALKS IN NEW YORK, MENON STATES THAT A SENIOR US OFFICIAL "PERSISTENTLY ATTEMPTED TO PRESS

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UPON INDIA THE GIFT OF HEAVY WATER WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER HAD PROMISED IN NEW DELHI. CATEGORICAL STATEMENTS BY THE INDIAN SIDE THAT INDIA DID NOT NEED THE HEAVY WATER ONLY LED TO MORE ATTEMPTS AT PERSUASION." REMARKING THAT US NEGOTIATORS HAVE NOT ATTEMPTED TO CONCEAL THAT THE US DESIRE TO GIVE INDIA HEAVY WATER IS TIED IN WITH US NON-PROLIFERATION GOALS, MENON REPORTS THAT US-SUPPLIED HEAVY WATER WOULD CARRY THE SAME "PURSUIT AND PERPETUITY CLAUSES" AS APPLY TO INDIA'S SOVIET-SUPPLIED CONSIGNMENT OF HEAVY WATER, WHICH BY THE WAY, THE JANATA GOVERNMENT "HAS BEEN VERY CAREFUL SO FAR NOT EVEN TO OPEN" SO AS NOT TO TRIGGER THE ATTACHED SAFEGUARDS. MENON NOTES THAT "THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS DECISION TO BUY HEAVY WATER FROM THE SOVIET UNION WAS A POLITICAL ONE, ARRIVED AT DESPITE VIGOROUS OBJECTIONS FROM SENIOR SCIENTIFIC ADVISERS."

4. MENON REPORTS THAT WHILE DETAILS OF THE INDO-US NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS REMAIN SECRET, "IT IS UNDERSTOOD THERE WAS SOME REFERENCE TO THE US PERMITTING INDIA TO REPROCESS SPENT FUEL FROM TARAPUR." THIS, HE

THINKS, WOULD CONSTITUTE "ANOTHER STEP IN THE GRADUAL
PROCESS OF BRINGING ABOUT SAFEGUARDS", SINCE
WHICHEVER NUCLEAR FACILITY USED THE PLUTONIUM DERIVED
FROM REPROCESSING TARAPUR'S SPENT FUEL WOULD
"AUTOMATICALLY" COME UNDER SAFEGUARDS. HE CONCLUDES
BY OBSERVING THAT "THE HARDLINERS IN INDIA CLEARLY
WANT TO HOLD OFF FURTHER APPLICATION OF SAFEGUARDS
TILL ABOUT 1980, WHEN THEY EXPECT A BREAKTHROUGH
IN THORIUM TECHNOLOGY, WHICH WOULD BY AND LARGE
FREE INDIA OF NUCLEAR DEPENDENCE."
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